

WORLD POPULATION CONFERENCE

SCOPE PAPER

THE CONFERENCE

This UN-convened World Population Conference, with 130 governments expected to attend, is the highlight of World Population Year. Both events are U.S. initiatives. Our major purpose is to obtain agreement to take more urgent, determined, local and international action to slow rapid population growth -- because of its burden on social and economic development and its contribution to interdependent, global problems of scarcities of food and resources and of damage to the environment.

The substantive agenda includes population trends and prospects, and the relationship of population to development, resources and environment, the family and, as the major topic, a World Population Plan of Action. A UN draft of this Plan has been reviewed at five regional preparatory meetings and is under study by governments prior to the Conference. Rightly treating population as an integral part of economic and social development, the draft contains inter alia, thirteen pages of comprehensive "Recommendations." Drafted to offend no one and achieve maximum consensus, the UN draft, though substantively unobjectionable, is too lengthy, technically demographic in language and its recommendations too watered down and permissive. At the conference we will seek, through formal and informal negotiations, subtly rather than blatantly three specific improvements:

1. The inclusion of certain additional principles, including the human right to have the information and means to determine family size and the obligation to do so responsibly, improvement in the status of women, the importance of taking account of the interests of other nations in deciding national policy and the necessity of international cooperation in this field.
2. The specification of goals for reducing rates of population growth for both developing and developed countries, and for the world, and
3. A condensed, focused, simply worded, summary version of the basic recommendations extracted from the UN draft.

These ideas, put forward in the UN Population Commission and regional consultative meetings, have been favorably received by a substantial number of other countries, although they are hesitant to provide open support. Any decision on whether to press for a "top-of-the-Plan" summary formulation must await consultation with other delegations in Bucharest.

ATTITUDES OF OTHERS

The Asian countries, where population problems are most acute, are aware of them; have policies for controlling population growth and will agree to strong action at the Conference.

The African countries (with some exceptions) are only slowly becoming aware of the problem, lack basic data and motivation and many tend to view U.S. promotion of population programs with suspicion.

Latin America is finally making considerable progress in instituting family planning programs, with the Caribbean in the lead and with Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela prominent. Brazil, formerly pro-natalist, is showing signs of a shift. Argentina is almost alone in its strongly pro-natalist stance.

Europe is reaching replacement level fertility, heading toward eventual zero population growth, so its problems are of a different order. In UN fora, France still maintains a pro-natalist stance, but in a recent dramatic change legalized the sale of contraceptives. The Scandinavians are the leaders in pushing global action to control population growth.

China, which some observers describe as a complete and effective family planning program takes an equivocal, but doctrinaire, position in international fora, blaming the LDC population problem on "colonialist exploitation" and insisting that economic and social revolution is the answer.

The USSR tends to take a similar, but less strident line in the UN. Soviet internal policy seems to seek to accelerate the Slavic and Baltic population growth rates. Eastern European countries have very low birth rates and Romania and Bulgaria are seeking to raise them.

MAJOR CONFERENCE ISSUES

A number of contentious issues are apt to arise at the Conference:

- 1) In some third world countries, U.S. and other DC motives in promoting population policies and family planning and in providing assistance in these fields are suspect as motivated by racism, economic imperialism and desire to maintain dominance.
- 2) Moreover some LDC's complain generally at the alleged profligate use of the world's resources by the U.S. and other developed countries and we may be faced with demands for a reduction in their use and a more equitable distribution.
- 3) A few LDC's argue that rapid population growth stimulates development, contrary to the U.S. view, and will therefore resist proposals to limit population growth.
- 4) The argument is also made that family planning programs cannot be effective without prior, major economic and social as well as structural changes in society. While the foregoing and other issues may be troublesome, we are well accustomed to dealing with them in UN bodies.

The World Population Plan of Action (not a binding agreement but a series of recommendations to governments) is consistent with U.S. programs and advances our foreign policy objectives. Targets to limit population growth are consistent with U.S. population trends. Recommendations for family planning policies and programs are consistent with U.S. programs.

Some difficulties are anticipated in having the Plan contain recommended goals and targets for both LDCs and DCs. For LDC goals we favor a reduction of the birth rate by 10 points per 1,000 by 1985 and replacement level of fertility in 2 or 3 decades. For DCs (which also have population problems and an equal or greater responsibility) we propose replacement levels by 1985 and stationary population as soon as practicable thereafter. The UN draft Plan calls for national population policies. The U.S. lacks one, although HEW does have a family planning program and in fact the U.S. has attained replacement level with eventual stabilization likely.

If the question of abortion should arise, we should point out that, with widely differing views, it is unwise and impractical for the Conference to seek an agreed position.

The Third World Population Conference is the first to be held at the government level. Only six countries (Laos, Malta, Niger, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Tonga) have indicated they will not attend, and all countries with large populations are expected to be present. It is clear that the meeting will be political, in the broad sense rather than ideological. It is also clear that the meeting will be a test for many nations of their ability to come together on a sensitive subject. The U.S. in recent years has been prominent in the population field, and the behavior of its delegation from the committees to the corridors requires walking prudently forward.

The U.S. Delegation should be open (in explaining its views and seriously listening to those of others), modest (particularly avoiding undue reference to U.S. initiatives, programs, and assistance), and constructive (in proposals and work with other delegations). The main mark -- other than its contribution to a successful conference -- which the U.S. should seek to leave on the Conference is an elevated level of ideas, modestly but earnestly put forward.

THREE INJUNCTIONS

1. The U.S. will not propose any specific new UN organizations or programs. We should seek to extend and enhance those which are already established in population and related fields.
2. The U.S. Delegation opposes any new institutional changes by the Conference in regard to UN population policy-making or action bodies (i.e., ECOSOC, Population Commission, United Nations Fund for Population Activities, UNDP Governing Council, the Specialized Agencies of the United Nations, or the World Bank). If any discussion in this regard arises in the Conference meetings, the U.S. should argue that (a) present institutions are working effectively, (b) it is not on the agenda, and (c) ECOSOC and the UN General Assembly are the proper place to discuss and decide on UN institutional arrangements. Any discussion, even corridor, by or with other delegations should be brought to the attention of the Head of Delegation.
3. The U.S. Delegation shall not introduce or instigate discussion of financial implications or any financial proposals or schemes in regard to population, family planning, or development assistance for recommendation by the Conference. The U.S. is unable to make any long-term commitments in the financial area, and its short-term

pledges and contributions are handled after approval by the U.S. Congress in the appropriate UN bodies. Financing is not on the agenda and the Conference is not the forum in which to discuss specific US financial commitments of either short or long duration. At the same time, the Head of Delegation may agree to the general notion that both development and population programs will require increased assistance from the developed as well as the newly wealthy nations.

GENERAL POSITIONS

1. The U.S. recognizes that the World Population Conference is a forum and recommendation body for population in its broadest aspects, including the reciprocal effects of population and social and economic change, environment and resources, and the quality of people's lives. We further recognize that the personal, political, and developmental styles of people will be affected by population factors.
2. We consider either/or discussions, particularly when drawn to the length of development rather than family planning, futile and unproductive. We consider family planning a complementary part of a development strategy as well as being an essential human right with benefits to both the persons affected directly and society at large.
3. We support the rising recognition of a need to arrive at stationary populations ultimately.
4. We welcome the interdependence of nations, their mutual development aims, and other global linkages.
5. We respect the reality of sovereignty and urge the recognition by sovereign states of the interests of other nations and mankind in the exercise of sovereignty.
6. We believe special attention is required in regard to human rights, the status of women, and the fair treatment of all minority groups in any population policy or program.

COMMITTEES

In addition to the Plenary the three Committees,

- I. Population Change and Economic and Social Development,
- II. Population, Resources, and Environment,
- III. Population and the Family,

and the Working Group on the World Population Plan of Action will be operating almost simultaneously August 20-26. Assignments to the Committees and the Working Group will be for the duration of the Conference and there will be no "floating" without the express assignment by the Head of Delegation or the Chief of Staff. This will require considerable discipline and coordination among the Delegation. There will be a morning staff meeting daily.

The staff advisors assigned to the Plenary and Committees will be responsible for preparing daily written reports and contributing to the Final Report of the Delegation which is to be completed prior to departure from Bucharest.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF CONFERENCE

1. The World Population Plan of Action should be the centerpiece of the Conference and contain all recommendations.
2. Committees are likely to adopt resolutions regardless of any pre-conference agreement to eliminate or restrict them. The U.S. should seek to discourage resolutions, particularly when irrelevant to the agenda item of the Committee. The U.S. should encourage the inclusion in each Committee Report of views expressed or agreed upon. Furthermore, the U.S. sees advantages in having the Committees review the portions of the Plan of Action relevant to their agenda item, to comment on those portions and forward their suggestions to the Working Group on the Plan of Action together with any additional recommendations deemed appropriate for the consideration of the Working Group.
3. The U.S. believes it is undesirable to have a declaration come from the Conference as it is likely to divert attention from the Plan of Action, otherwise distract the Conference, and possibly produce irrelevancies and discord.

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

The U.S. seeks to move the Conference from a celebration of the accomplished and accepted to a dedication to the difficult and necessary.

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